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Beyond Hierarchy

Reimagining African Diaspora Dance in Higher Education Curricula

TAKIYAH NUR AMIN

As dance became ensconced in the academy with the early 1960s establishment of programs at UC-Irvine, UC-Los Angeles and others,¹ department curricula generally prioritized European-derived movement vocabularies, aesthetics and approaches to dance education. This emphasis on what Dr. Nyama McCarthy-Brown refers to as “western and historically privileged techniques”² marginalized other movement vocabularies and perspectives, including African-derived dances and their aesthetic principles, within higher-education dance curricula. Citing Judith Lynne Hanna’s *Partnering Dance and Education*, McCarthy-Brown notes Sarah Hilsendager’s revealing quote:

The majority of university dance programs emphasize Ballet and Modern genres, “which are Eurocentric in both content and teaching approach.” Dance forms with origins other than Europe are often slighted, causing future teachers to be unprepared for working with diverse student populations.³

The emphasis in undergraduate dance education in particular on performance as central to the course of study often leaves little room for thorough and critical consideration of other aspects of dance as an academic discipline. While dance is a performing art, it is also a humanities discipline, constituted by overlapping and

mutually constitutive practices, of which performance is only one. Building on McCarthy-Brown, Doug Risener, Julie Kerr-Berry and others, I argue for a reimagining of curricula that, using African diaspora dance as an example, destabilizes the central position of Western and historically privileged movement and approaches. Centering an investment in the development of twenty-first-century skills (including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, digital/media literacy, and global awareness), I posit that a *practice*-based (as opposed to a *performance*-based) approach to the development of higher-education dance curricula creates space for African diaspora dance and similarly marginalized movement vocabularies to be amplified within the academy, and in undergraduate dance education specifically. By understanding dance as an academic discipline grounded in a set of inter-related practices (including research, teaching, movement, somatic, choreographic, and pedagogical approaches,) institutions committed to inclusive, progressive and meaningful curricula can abandon the historic prioritization of Eurocentric approaches to movement and embrace a fuller range of possibilities for undergraduate dance students in higher education.

Why African Diaspora Dance? Definitions, Terminology and the Context of Higher Education

The African diaspora refers to communities that descend from the movement of native peoples from Africa, predominantly to the Americas, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, among other areas around the globe. As

such, the umbrella term “African diaspora dance” refers to the full range of dance and expressive movement vocabularies, aesthetics, and philosophies emanating from these communities. The term recognizes traditional and/or classical corporeal forms, as well as contemporary movement vocabularies emerging from across the diaspora. Within the context of African diaspora dance, one might explore the historical roots of hip hop dance as a contemporary African-derived form as readily as theorizing the impact of postcolonial migration on dances from a particular African language and/or cultural group. So-called “Latin” and “Caribbean” dance forms are included within the African diaspora dance framework, as are tap and jazz dance, uniquely North American forms shaped by Africanist aesthetics.

While other non-Eurocentric movement vocabularies have been marginalized and/or sublimated within dance curricula in higher education, I focus here on dances that emanate from the African diaspora, for three reasons. First, African diaspora dances represent some of the most dynamic, recognizable and influential movement vocabularies in popular culture. One need only consider the ubiquitous impact of hip-hop dance’s various iterations as evidence of its global stronghold. Second, African diaspora dances have been critical to the development of twentieth- and twenty-first-century American concert dance, whether explicitly referenced in choreography or deconstructed and appropriated for their generative possibilities. Third, as a persistent, influential and foundational aspect of American culture, it is both odd and iniquitous that dances from the African diaspora remain marginal within the study of

dance in US higher education. Studying American dance history without critical, sustained engagement with African diaspora dance renders one’s education thoroughly deficient. As Kerr-Berry writes, higher education “fails to fully represent American dance as a product of cultural fusion in all facets of a dance student’s educational experiences” and “curricula and pedagogic practices are unsuccessful in acknowledging the assumptions of white superiority” that maintain this state of affairs.⁴

While dance has managed to secure a position as a recognized academic discipline, it faces significant challenges in “diversifying its faculty and student body, as well as its pedagogic practices and curricula.” Kerr-Berry argues that “such resistance exists because white hegemony is the norm in academia, which “has not kept pace with African-American concert dance participation.” The persistence of white cultural dominance and the overwhelmingly white dance faculty population in the academy (79.5 percent in 2011)⁵ is certainly implicated in the marginalization of African diaspora dance within higher-education curricula and the continued emphasis on highlighting Western and historically privileged movement vocabularies and aesthetics. While the contemporary scholarship of Brenda Dixon-Gottschild, Kariamu Welsh, Susan Manning, Thomas F. DeFrantz, John Perpener and others has increased the academic body of knowledge about African diaspora dance, their work “is being integrated into college and university dance courses at a slow trickle—minimally affecting Eurocentric paradigms of teaching and learning.”⁶ The persistent marginalization of both the movement vocabularies under the African diaspora dance

umbrella and scholarship that documents and theorizes its impactful contributions is a notable blemish on dance in higher education. Moreover, the impulse, when African diaspora dance is present, to focus on how it is indistinct from other dance forms in the spirit of multiculturalism, only serves to “diminishes the nuance and cultural specificity of all forms,”⁷ doing nothing to challenge the persistent dominance of Eurocentric dance forms and aesthetics in higher education. White cultural hegemony within dance in higher education continues the marginalization of African diaspora dance, rendering its contributions, histories and aesthetics largely moot.

A word on terminology: I use “movement vocabularies,” “approaches to movement,” or “dance forms” in place of the more commonly used terms “technique” and/or “style.” This is intentional: “technique” has been used to distinguish and prioritize European dance forms and aesthetic approaches; “style” is often invoked to reference vernacular, popular or “street” dance forms deemed to be less developed than the coveted Western forms of ballet and modern dance. In its simplest iteration, a “technique” is merely an approach, a means to accomplish something. As such, all dance forms have within them some method or sense of how the movement is executed. To distance the ideas herein from the power differentials and hierarchies traditionally employed by the use of the term “technique,” I abandon it altogether for the sake of this article.

Getting Past Performance: Dance as a Humanities Discipline

The 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act defines “humanities” as:

[Including but ...] not limited to, the study and interpretation of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; *the history, criticism and theory of the arts*; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and *the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.*⁸

Dance is both a performing art and a humanities discipline. As a primal and exclusive aspect of the human experience pre-dating both spoken and written language, dance functions in part as an embodied text by which heritage and tradition can be preserved, communicated and interpreted. Further, dance is a means by which “the current conditions of national life” are explored and expressed. Classical dance traditions, including southern India’s Bharatanatyam, the ballet tradition of France and the Senegambia region’s Lamban certainly reflect “heritage, tradition and history” inasmuch as contemporary movement vocabularies reflect the shifting boundaries of an increasingly complex, global world. Humanities disciplines allow one to study human culture through both critical and historical approaches. The presence and persistence of dance within the social, cultural, and spiritual aspects of human life further evidence that, beyond its dominant interpretation as a performing art, dance is a reference point for the study of human lived experience. Dance

embraces or contains within it performance as an important but not singular modality: many people in the world will never explicitly *perform*; most people will *dance* at some point in their lives. Central to understanding dance as fundamental to the human experience is not necessarily the act of *performance*, but the act of *dancing*.

The emphasis in many dance programs on centering performance and the wholesale embrace of Western and historically privileged dance forms and approaches has fostered two firm realities in higher education: (1) undergraduate dance students must demonstrate mastery in performance; and (2) such mastery must be evidenced by proficiency in Eurocentric movement vocabularies and aesthetics. While forms other than ballet and modern dance may be present in a curriculum, it is rare that mastery in African-derived or other similarly marginalized forms is central to degree attainment beyond the completion of elective study. Importantly, classes taught on dances of the African diaspora have been among course offerings for over thirty years⁹ and there are some institutions—including Duke University, Columbia College Chicago, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and Arizona State University, to name just a few—that include such sustained coursework in their degree programs. Regardless, the persistent reality reflects narrowness across the field of higher education with regard to thoughtfully implementing curricula that embraces the full range of practices constituting dance as a discipline and that centralizes African diaspora dance studies in particular as a primary aspect of one’s education. The result is a recapitulation of business as usual, the privileging

of Western movement vocabularies, and the assertion of performance as the dominant endeavor, as illustrated in Figure 1 in which the larger circle illustrates the centrality of performance mastery and demonstrated physical competency in ballet and modern dance as the dominant configuration of many undergraduate dance programs. In it, the range of other practices and non-Eurocentric movement vocabularies are present, but peripheralized and sublimated. This arrangement belies the complexity of dance as an academic discipline and refuses meaningful engagement with other dance forms in general and African diaspora dance in particular.

From Performance to Practice: Opportunities for Curricular Change

Dr. Jan Van Dyke, Professor Emeritus at UNC Greensboro, wrote in a 2010 column for the *Journal of Dance Education* that it is critical for undergraduate dance programs to “give young artists more preparation than simply learning to dance” and “that those earning dance degrees need more knowledge and experience than how to dance or even how to make dances.”¹⁰ How might a shift to a practice-based approach to curriculum development constitute that “knowledge and experience” to which Van Dyke gestures? And what might African diaspora dance have to offer in that regard?

Changing dominant paradigms in dance curricula requires an awareness of its contours as an academic discipline. According to the U.K.’s National Centre for Research Methods at the University of Southampton, academic disciplines have identifiable, defining characteristics, including:¹¹

- a specific, particular object of research which may be shared with another discipline
- a body of “specialist knowledge” referring to that object of research that is generally not shared with another discipline
- theories and/or concepts that organize the aforementioned body of knowledge
- specific, disciplinary terminology or language
- specific research methods according to their research requirements and
- some institutional manifestation in the form of subjects taught at universities and/or colleges via academic departments/programs and propagated by professional associations.

While dance intersects and may share the object of study (i.e., human movement in time and space) with other disciplines, its presence in the academy has grown to include all of the characteristics noted above. It seems reasonable, then, that academic study in dance should hold in tension its undergirding range of practices and require student engagement therewith in undergraduate degree programs. A practice-based approach to developing dance curricula might take the form of Figure 2, in which the act of dancing becomes central to the curriculum. In this model, students are expected to engage with the various practices that establish and compose dance as a discipline, including a range of movement vocabularies (dance forms), research practices (methods), choreographic practices (approaches to dance-making as art), performance practices/approaches, somatic/therapeutic practices, and teaching norms. Performance is not

absent, but is equitably engaged alongside the other disciplinary underpinnings, in non-hierarchical relationship to each other. Here, the decentering of performance and the shift to “movement vocabularies” away from emphasizing competency in ballet and modern dance breaks open room for engagement with a range of forms, including African diaspora dance. The model does not suggest substituting performance mastery for isolated expertise in some other practice, but rather engagement with dance across the range of practices that form its disciplinary contours. Additionally, Figure 2 suggests exploring movement vocabularies across the range of ways that dance shows up in human life, as performance but also as social, spiritual and cultural expression.

This model does not suggest that African diaspora dance must be at the center of study, but rather that the vocabularies therein be considered among many equally valid forms of dance suitable for study. As movement vocabularies often inform praxis, Figure 2 implies that any movement vocabulary might function as a critical lens through which students approach the other practices constituting dance as a discipline. Amplifying African diaspora dance within higher-education curricula poses unexplored and underexplored questions ripe for critical engagement: What do dances from the African diaspora offer in terms of choreographic praxis? How does African diaspora dance, as the subject of inquiry, influence research method(s)? What teaching practices are implicated in the study of various African diaspora dances, and what best practices emerge therein? What somatic/therapeutic

possibilities might movement vocabularies under the umbrella of African diaspora dance have to offer? What performance practices and approaches are most appropriate to the presentation of various dances of the African diaspora? Most importantly: how might African diaspora dances inform, facilitate, and support the broader goals of liberal education and twenty-first-century skill development for undergraduate students in higher education?

What the World Needs Now: Liberal Education and Twenty-First-Century Skills

The sustained emphasis on dance as a performing art in the academy has ensured, according to Professor Doug Risener, “that dance programs in higher education... often focus most of their energy, attention and resources to ever increasing BFA programs”—that is, degrees offering professionalization experiences to undergraduate students, primarily in performance and choreography. Revealing the irony of this focus, Risener notes that liberal arts degrees in dance (BA, BS) constitute more than half of those awarded and “the majority of undergraduate dance majors will not seriously pursue or successfully attain professional dance careers in performance or choreography.”¹² That some 60 percent of dance degrees awarded are liberal arts and not professional degrees suggests that an increased emphasis on the creation, development and maintenance of BFA programs that emphasize on training performers and dance makers is ill advised. Since dance degree attainment is happening largely within liberal arts degree programs, it is critical to reconsider

what liberal education involves and requires in the twenty-first century.

According to the Association for American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U,) a twenty-first-century liberal arts education¹³

is an approach to learning *that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change.* It provides students with *broad knowledge of the wider world* (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of *social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.*
[Emphasis added]

Liberal education is centered not on the mastery of a discrete skillset, but on effectively managing life in an increasingly complicated global landscape. Students are expected, under this paradigm, to explore possibilities, make independent choices and develop transferable communication and analysis skills in order to apply their knowledge within the wider community. As dance scholar and educator Ann Dils writes, “reading and writing ... [are] vital to our abilities to think, create, and share information and to participate in society.”¹⁴ Liberal education does not fixate on a singular field of study or emphasize specific vocational or technical skills. While students are expected to engage “in-depth study in a specific area of interest,” the goal is not necessarily professionalization in that field. This sense that

students might explore a range of topics and practices to develop “broad knowledge of the wider world” is illustrative of the meaning of “liberal” as a synonym for “free”: students are free to choose, to explore, to make choices, to analyze, to consider, and are not necessarily urged toward any particular professional endeavor or career.

Liberal education’s emphasis on social responsibility, intellectual and practical skill development, and the ability to apply knowledge mirrors the characteristics most in demand by today’s employers. According to a 2007 national poll conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the AAC&U, the top ten qualities needed for today’s undergraduate students to thrive in a global economy are:¹⁵

- (1) The ability to work well in teams—especially with people different from yourself
- (2) An understanding of science and technology and how these subjects are used in real-world settings
- (3) The ability to write and speak well
- (4) The ability to think clearly about complex problems
- (5) The ability to analyze a problem to develop workable solutions
- (6) An understanding of global context in which work is now done
- (7) The ability to be creative and innovative in solving problems
- (8) The ability to apply knowledge and skills in new settings
- (9) The ability to understand numbers and statistics
- (10) A strong sense of ethics and integrity.

These results were later affirmed in a 2014 survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), whose *Job Outlook Survey* distills the list of desired qualities and characteristics to five core abilities:¹⁶

- (1) Ability to make decisions and solve problems
- (2) Ability to verbally communicate with persons inside and outside the organization
- (3) Ability to obtain and process information
- (4) Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
- (5) Ability to analyze quantitative data.

Consider again that most undergraduate dance students will not secure professional careers in performance and choreography. Liberal arts degree programs in dance (BA/BS) would do well to focus on ensuring that their graduates are equipped with the characteristics and skills noted above in order to engage an increasingly complex global landscape. If current trends persist and more than half of undergraduate degree attainment remains outside of BFA programs focused on performance and choreography, higher education dance must consider how it can more readily support the development of twenty-first-century skills among its students. The question facing dance in higher education is *how* to explicitly prepare students to navigate a global economy, communicate effectively across groups, collaborate meaningfully, develop creative solutions to social problems, deploy digital and media skills, and think critically about ethical, social, and cultural issues. While coursework emphasizing performance proficiency and choreographic

skill might facilitate some development in these areas, their emphasis on content mastery does not necessarily ensure twenty-first-century skill development. Similarly, while an institution can create degree programs that foster twenty-first-century skill development *and* mastery in discrete movement vocabularies or performance, *the latter can be achieved with no attention to the former*. As such, it is reasonable, worthwhile and timely for those vested with the power to develop higher education dance curricula to center the development of twenty-first-century skills in consideration of “multi-career preparation” for students.¹⁷

Complexity, Diversity and Change: Opportunities for Dance Curricula in Higher Education

Developing curricula that decenters an emphasis on performance and fosters critical engagement with the range of practices constituting dance as an academic discipline supports the necessary shift toward twenty-first-century skill development. Consider: in a practice-based approach to dance curricula, performance and choreography are not means to an end in themselves. Rather, they function to develop in-demand skills, including collaboration and communication. Student engagement with dance pedagogy becomes a way to enhance communication skills (written, spoken, and danced) within a diverse global economy; such communications are facilitated via traditional (and, increasingly, digital) means. Teaching research methods nurtures creative problem-solving abilities. In a practice-based model, engagement with therapeutic/somatic

practices becomes a site not for the training of practitioners per se, but for cultivating empathy and raising questions about ethical engagement in various sociocultural contexts. While performance, choreography, and the other practices noted here have intrinsic value, extending and demonstrating their universal worth relative to twenty-first-century skill development is critical to the maintenance and perpetuation of dance degree programs in higher education. But what of the central object of research within the discipline—the act of dancing? What possibilities do movement vocabularies, especially those under the banner of African diaspora dance, offer to twenty-first-century skill development?

The diverse range of African diaspora dance forms is particularly well suited to developing in-demand characteristics for college and university graduates. The makings of the African diaspora include the massive scattering and involuntary global displacement of African-descended people as well as pre- and postcolonial immigration and emigration. Those experiences shaped dances of the African diaspora into manifold vocabularies with varying forms, functions and meanings. While dances like twerking and Memphis jooking, for example, are both under the canopy of African diaspora dance, they embody distinct histories and connotations. The enduring nature of African diasporic experience is such that dance forms continue to emerge, change, and leave aesthetic markers on other movement vocabularies in global popular culture.¹⁸ As undergraduate students gain an understanding of the opportunities, contradictions, and possibilities that exist in a global economy,

engagement with dances of the African diaspora provides a means by which to explore the impact of political, cultural, and social shifts on human lives. As embodied “texts,” African diaspora dance renders legible the complexities inherent within the lived experiences of forced and voluntary migration, enslavement, and colonialism. *Dances of the African diaspora are diverse*; and they exist in the popular and sacred realms, within the context of theatrical performance and daily, lived experience. Sustained engagement with the histories, theories, aesthetics and philosophies embodied within various traditional and contemporary dances of the African diaspora invites students to face ambiguity, wrestle with diversity and thoughtfully consider the ethical impact of change, involuntary or otherwise, on the social, spiritual, and cultural aspects of human experience. While one might choose to explore dances of the African diaspora for performance mastery or proficiency in some discrete vocabulary, the pervasive, manifold, and ever-changing qualities of these dance forms suggest opportunities to do much more in support of twenty-first-century skill development.

By destabilizing the prioritization of Western and highly privileged forms within dance curricula in higher education and making room for other movement vocabularies to be equitably engaged, the primacy of performance and the Western theatrical tradition begins to yield. What remains is the possibility for liberal arts degree programs in dance to become *intentional* sites for developing an educated global citizenry equipped with the skills to live in a complex global environment and make ethical, informed

choices. Facilitated by a practice-based approach to dance as an academic discipline, dance degree programs have the opportunity to become the *premiere* location for multi-career preparation, positioning students to be successful beyond performance and choreography. Abandoning preoccupations with student proficiency primarily in discrete Eurocentric movement vocabularies, aesthetics, and performance traditions reveals the broad potential of dance programs to help students craft lives of meaning, service, impact, and enduring significance. In “Questioning Trends in University Dance,” Van Dyke alludes to these possibilities:¹⁹

Personally, I have wished for more time to discuss with students the cultural relationship with perception and how viewers respond to what they see, how American public policy interacts with the arts, how art communicates, how artistic ideas manifest in dance and when dance goes beyond personal gratification for the dance artist into the realm of meaningful communication with an audience. Without doubt, I agree that, in human terms, a university education in dance is forward thinking and beneficial, leading us all to happier lives and making our practice less authoritarian and more inclusive and democratic than in the past. Making sense of the demanding and sometimes conflicting priorities we have developed raises interesting and challenging questions.

Van Dyke suggest that students interested in public health, arts-based interventions in the criminal justice system, public administration and policy, social justice, and education, for

example, might find great utility in a degree or certificate program that, in place of Western and historically privileged vocabularies emphasizes cultivating twenty-first-century skills through a recognition of evolving, robust, and diverse dance practices. The many forms of African diaspora dance, as corporeal histories of migration, community, heritage, and culture offer provocative possibilities toward including sustained engagement with dance as a central force in human life. Making this change in dance education will require significant changes in dance educator training: a commitment to resisting hegemony and embracing critical pedagogy are essential for dance degree programs to impart their unique potential as intentional sites for multi-career preparation and training grounds for transferable, in-demand, twenty-first-century skills.

Pathways to Critical Pedagogy in Dance Education

Critical pedagogy views teaching and learning as a conversation among teachers and students, using the knowledge students enter the classroom with as an intentional pathway to learning new concepts. This process of “conscientization” is intended to inform the perceptions of both student and teacher. Developed by Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire in the 1960s, critical pedagogy is intended to disrupt barriers between student and teacher, offering empowering opportunities for learning. Critical pedagogy’s emphasis on active learning and student engagement through dialog yields several key principles that music educator Frank Abrahams posits as essential to ensuring that

“musical knowledge gained, no matter how limited, is meaningful and retained longer in life,” including: (1) music education as a conversation informed by problems and questions posed by students and teachers; (2) that the goal of teaching and learning is to broaden a student’s view of reality and impact the way both students and teachers see the world. Moreover, Freire’s notion of “conscientization” is a process of empowerment that “implies a knowing that has depth and goes beyond the recall of information and includes understanding and the ability to act on learning in such a way as to affect a change.” Under this model, education is both transformative and political, allowing students and teachers to recognize changes in their perception of the world and to resist the constraints that institutions impose on classroom learning.²⁰

Higher-education dance curricula’s unique opportunity to engage the range of possibilities implicated in a practice-based approach to the discipline, release the potential offered by sustained engagement with African diaspora dance and foster the development of twenty-first-century skills requires dance educators willing to embrace critical pedagogy in the classroom. Through a commitment to Freire’s “conscientization” process and application of the core principles in the CPME model, dance educators can, with their students, resist authoritarian educational paradigms meant to cede institutional power solely to the hands of the instructor. By honoring and centralizing the lived experiences that dance students bring into the classroom, educators might disrupt the hierarchy that prioritizes Western and historically privileged dance forms and their

mastery and performance as most important to degree attainment. No longer are all other dance forms subjugated to Eurocentric aesthetics and traditions. The application of critical pedagogy creates an opportunity to actively resist and transform the pervasive white cultural hegemony of dance in the academy in favor of an inclusive and diverse vision for dance education. If, as Sherry Shapiro writes, “dance education as a discipline and curricular subject cannot forego critical reflection upon issues of historical, social and cultural construction,”²¹ then similar scrutiny is demanded in teaching. Dance scholar Jill Green notes that a number of thinkers in dance education engage critical pedagogy with regard to “how issues such as body image, teacher and student power relationships, and pressure to meet aesthetic and bodily ideals, affect dance students and the ways dance is taught.” Needed to combat the ongoing white cultural hegemony in dance in higher education is a conscientious, meticulous and purposeful turn toward embracing the commitment within critical pedagogy to focus on “social justice issues and marginalization regarding levels of status such as race, gender, culture, class, sexuality, ability, and so on ... and on how these levels of status play out in traditional Western dance training.”²²

In a conversation about the future of dance education with Thomas K. Hagood, professor Emeritus Luke C. Kahlich notes:

There is so little time or energy spent on considering what teaching and learning in dance is all about. You don't have many people coming through the pipeline that have had any experience asking questions, debating,

and/or deeply considering what dance education is ... I don't see or hear much responsibility about the future the dance educator has to securing and forwarding the field. I don't think there's much discussion about responsibility to the larger benefit of the field. It's not about you being in dance, it's about dance being in the world.²³

Dance curricula in higher education must consider its responsibility to the future of the field and inculcate that concern within its students to ensure the discipline's perpetuation and expose its value beyond the academy. By embracing a practice-based approach, decentering Western and historically privileged dance forms and emphasizing twenty-first-century skill development, liberal arts degree programs in dance are especially poised to reshape the future of the field. Application of critical pedagogy within dance classrooms in higher education, and sustained engagement with the wealth of traditional and contemporary dance forms under the umbrella of African diaspora dance, create an opportunity to move dance curricula beyond hierarchy.

Notes

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23. Hagood, 242.

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